



Department of Development Services
Planning Division
Meeting Minutes of the
Planning & Zoning Commission
(Approved)

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2010**

Commissioners Present

Sandra Bobowski
Temple Shannon
David Blatt
Edwin Vargas, Jr.
John Lupo, Jr.
Gerry Pleasant, Alternate
David Jorgensen, Alternate

Staff Present

Roger J. O'Brien
Kim Holden
Jonathan Mullen
Don Chapman
Stephanie Krue

I. Public Listening Session

a. Comments will be taken regarding One City, One Plan, Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development for the Asylum Hill, Parkville, and West End neighborhoods.

David Barrett, of the West End Civic Association introduced himself, Bernie Michel of Asylum Hill, and Joe Langlais of the Parkville neighborhood. He stated that these three neighborhoods would be the focus of the meeting.

Mr. Barrett took up some West End Civic Association business before the public listening session began. He then introduced Sandra Bobowski as the Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Chairperson Bobowski gave an introduction to the public listening session, discussing past theme meetings and Roger O'Brien's presentation at the first session in the South End. She then introduced Mr. O'Brien to give his presentation regarding One City, One Plan.

Mr. O'Brien introduced the Mayor and the Director of Development Services. He then gave a brief overview of the theme panels that had occurred in the fall. He stated that much of the feedback from those meetings had contributed to changes that were made to the second draft of the Plan.

Mr. O'Brien summarized the main goals of One City, One Plan and stated that these were the main focus of the theme panels. He stated that the main focus of tonight's meeting would be the future land use map for the Asylum Hill, Parkville, and West End neighborhoods.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the generalized land use categories and various residential densities for the three neighborhoods. He compared the differences between the existing and future land use maps. He noted that the decrease in purple areas in the future land use map was because there is now a distinction between industrial and commercial land use categories, whereas there was so such distinction in 1996.

Mr. O'Brien stated that NRZ plans are in the process of being incorporated into One City, One Plan.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the goals in the Plan designated for Asylum Hill and asked the audience to offer any further comments or suggestions.

Jackie McKinney stated that Asylum Hill is too dense. She stated that a forty four unit apartment building was built in a lot that was once single family houses. She discussed how one of the main goals is to decrease the density for the neighborhood.

Another member of the audience stated that Asylum Hill had a 9% homeownership rate according to the 2000 Census and that he predicts that number will be lower for the 2010 Census. He stated that by decreasing the density and promoting more single and two family homes, there is a higher chance that there will be an increase in homeownership.

Julianne Lugo, a member of the audience, stated that an important project to add to the existing list would be the streetscape improvements along Farmington Avenue that Asylum Hill has been working with WECA to accomplish.

A member of the audience stated that a main concern of hers were single family houses being converted to two family houses and two family houses that get converted into three family houses. Mr. O'Brien stated that the zoning regulations will be modified to better match up with the land use categories.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the goals in the Plan designated for Parkville and asked the audience to offer any further comments or suggestions.

David Morin, stated that New Park Avenue to Prospect Street has a land use category of neighborhood business. He felt that it needed to be changed because the Parkville Plaza needs development. Also, he stated that the corner of Merrill Street and Prospect Street has an area of residential units that he felt should not be categorized as neighborhood business either.

Mr. O'Brien then discussed the plan to extend Bartholomew Avenue and how that ties into the Parkville neighborhood.

Ray, a member of the audience, asked if there was any effort to encourage senior citizens to move back into Hartford. He suggested doing this by promoting a sense of security provided by improving the efforts of the police. Mr. O'Brien stated that public safety is one of the top twenty issues that are of concern and being incorporated into the Plan.

A member of the audience stated that the extension of Bartholomew Avenue will allow for the Behing the Rocks, Southwest and Parkville neighborhoods to collaborate and develop the area of land that is now Aerospace Meadows.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the goals in the Plan designated for the West End and asked the audience to offer any further comments or suggestions.

A member of the audience stated that she felt improvements should be made to Elizabeth Park and recreation fields.

Mary Rickel Pelletier discussed briefly the Connecticut DEP plan for the north branch of the Park River and what needs to be done to restore it.

Members of WECA presented a PowerPoint discussing some of the main goals for their neighborhood. Kathy presented a number of residential goals for the West End including to preserve and protect the historic character of the West End properties, implement a residential overlay to protect upward conversions, allow accessory dwelling units at owner occupied properties for carriage houses and one to two family homes with the condition of adequate off street parking, adopt a transition overlay district for properties abutting the commercial zone, and to improve and enforce residential parking, building and zoning standards.

A discussion occurred regarding how these goals include the large percentage of renters in the West End. An audience member stated that none of the goals excludes renters but also that the West End wants to encourage homeownership.

Kathy continued the presentation with commercial related goals including to complete the implementation of the Farmington Avenue streetscape, rezone the B-3 and B-4 West End commercial district into a new neighborhood business zone, create and adopt design guidelines for the West End commercial districts, specifically moving up the building line on Farmington Avenue to make it more pedestrian friendly, and to beautify and maintain the gateway entrances to the neighborhood.

Kathy continued to state that the West End would like to preserve and enhance the quality and access of recreational uses at Elizabeth Park, improve the maintenance and management of the recreation fields, find a site south of Farmington Avenue for a recreational use area, support the protection and maintenance of the North branch of the Park River, and explore the creation of a dog park in an appropriate location.

Kathy stated that the West End would like to encourage the conversion of institutional uses on residential streets to private residential uses and to prohibit the conversion of residential to institutional uses.

An audience member asked about the conversion of current institutional uses to other institutional uses such as a school, state building, or other facility that will not increase the tax base. She asked about alternatives to help benefit the tax base. Another audience member

responded by saying that if the use was not grandfathered then the main goal is to encourage the conversion back to private residential uses.

Mr. O'Brien questioned the conflict between the West End not wanting to convert one family houses to two family houses or twos to threes, yet also wanting to create accessory dwelling units.

An audience member stated that the conversion is permanent and does not require owner occupancy whereas an accessory dwelling unit would be temporary with a Certificate of Occupancy and annual renewal, and the principal structure must be owner occupied.

Phil, a member of the audience, stated that there are rows of apartment buildings along the north and south sides of Farmington Avenue when observing the neighborhood business category. Mr. O'Brien asked if he preferred seeing it as a medium or high density residential category. Another audience member also questioned using a medium or high density residential category rather than a neighborhood business category on Sisson Avenue near Clemens place.

Mr. O'Brien then explained the representation of institutional uses such as schools on the future land use map for an audience member who asked why Noah Webster School was not shown.

Mary Rickel Pellitier summarized the goals for parks and open space in the West End including Elizabeth Park and briefly discussed the Friends of Elizabeth Park Board.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there will be two more listening sessions following tonight's and also explained the formal process for the adoption of One City, One Plan. He stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission is available for the rest of the session to conduct informal conversations relating to any comments or suggestions audience members have to offer.

An audience member stated that he hopes there has been planning done to incorporate low income or unemployed residents of Hartford.

Martha Kelly, of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, stated that the members have some recommendations such as improving streetscapes; having the State (rather than the City) perform maintenance on State highways such as Route 44; the maintenance of parks and implementation of park rangers; protecting the Park and Connecticut Rivers; cross-town buses; and the utilization of brownfields.

David Panagore discussed the trouble Hartford has had accessing federal funding that could be used for brownfield remediation.

Mr. O'Brien stated that EPA stimulus money has been used to remediate brownfields on Homestead Avenue.

Senator Fonfarra stated that education should be a more focused goal in order to promote sustainable and liveable neighborhoods. He also suggested using shared values as a main objective for the Plan.

Joe Wasserman, another member of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, offered some more recommendations such as using smart buses and on street recycling.

An audience member asked what was being done to encourage the middle class to move back into Hartford. He also suggested a trolley line going down Farmington Avenue into Downtown.

An audience member stated that Hawthorn Street is an area of toxic waste and wanted to know what was proposed for that area. Mr. O'Brien stated that is is a proposed transit oriented development site but that he was unaware of the status of the remediation.

Mr. O'Brien discussed various proposed multimodal transportation facilities, the TIGER grant application, and a new concept in Hartford referred to as "pedestrian level of service."

Mr. O'Brien stated that the public listening session would be concluding and that anyone who wanted to stay for the continuance of the WECA meeting was welcome to do so.

II. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Roger J. O'Brien, Secretary/Director